

Restore

The Power of Partnerships

Restore New Mexico Newsletter • Spring 2012



Restore New Mexico is an ambitious partnership to restore our state's grasslands, woodlands and riparian areas to a healthy and productive condition. Since the program began in 2005, more than 1.8 million acres of impaired habitat have been treated, starting the transition to healthy ecological states.

The Power of Partnerships

By Jesse Juen, BLM-New Mexico State Director

One of our guiding philosophies at the BLM is to leave the land in better shape than we found it. Under Restore New Mexico, we've been working to make that vision a reality.

Seven years in to the Restore program, the BLM and our partners have treated over 1.8 million acres of degraded land across New Mexico. It cannot be overstated that this success would not have been possible without the commitment and contributions of the many partners involved in this historic land restoration effort.

Without our partners, we'd be lucky to complete only meager restoration projects, nothing that would benefit the land on a broad landscape scale. What we've found is that even among a diverse group of partners - ranchers, environmentalists, industry groups, sportsmen, as well as other federal and state agencies - there is a lot that we have in common. And when we work together to realize a shared vision, remarkable things can happen, including the return of healthy, native grasslands, better habitat for wildlife, improved soil and water conditions, enhanced opportunities for recreationists and sportsmen, as well as better economic conditions for those whose livelihood depends on the land.

Working cooperatively with partners to find common ground and develop strategies to bring about shared goals, we've been able to pool resources, knowledge, and skills to accomplish restoration projects on a landscape scale, something that simply would not have been possible by working independently.

Our partners are proud of the work we've done under Restore these past few years. However, there are millions of acres of impaired habitat across New Mexico we'd still like to treat. This won't be easy, but I'm confident in the future success our partnership will have.

In the pages ahead, you'll read about some of Restore New Mexico's successful partnerships. Unfortunately, we can't feature them all - that would require a book, not a newsletter! But listed on the adjacent page are the partners who've joined this historic effort and deserve credit for the 1.8 million acres in New Mexico that are healthier today than they were seven years ago. Thank you to all of the many individuals and organizations who have helped to leave the land across New Mexico in better shape than we found it!



RESTORE NEW MEXICO

A. K. Brown Estate • Ace and Kay Peterson • Alamo Ranch Company • Albuquerque Wildlife Federation • Allen and Frances Kasparian • American Petroleum Institute • Angel Peak Cattlemen Association • Art Sanchez • Aztec Ruins National Park • Barbara Runyan • Bass Enterprises Production Company • Beckham Ranch • Bennie Wooton • BEPCO • Berry Ranch • Betty and Scotty Cox • BHP Billiton • Bill and Emily Collins • Bill Gallacher • Bill Luther • Bill Marley • Bill Smith • Bill Wyre • Billy Jack Pound • Blancett Land and Cattle • Bob Carter • Bogle Ltd. Company • BOPCO • BP America • Brian Cooper Corporation • Brininstool XL Ranch • Brown Acres • Bruce Sterling • Bryan Prather • Bureau of Reclamation • Butterfield Trail Ranch • Byron Paschal • C&R Ranch • Carl Madison • Carlsbad Soil and Water Conservation District • Casaus Brothers and Ralph Duran • Cash and Kansas Massey • Cecil Bounds • Champion Land & Cattle • Charles Wagner • Charlie Bradley • Chevron • Chihuahuan Desert Conservation Association • Chris Velasquez • Cimarex Energy Company • Claramai Hayhurst • Clemmons & Erdmann Ranch • Clint and Martha Lynch • Clyde and Glenda Mahan • Cody Lee • COG Operating • Conejo Cattle Co. • Conoco Phillips • Cora Gomez • Craig and Casey Spradley • Cutter Cattle Co. • Dagger Draw Ranch • Dale Muncy • Dan Murray • Dan Selzer • Daniel Berry III • Daniel Munoz • Danny Bryant • Dave Farr • David Kincaid • David Maley • Davin Montoya • Dawson Geophysical Company • DD Barker • Deep Wells Ranch • Del Peterson • Devon Energy • Dewey and Marcella Sexton • Dewey Brown • Dewey Sexton • DF Ranch Partners • Dinwiddie Cattle Co. • Don and Jane Schreiber • Don Gosney • Don Miles • Doña Ana County Associated Sportsmen • Doña Ana County Soil and Water Conservation District • Donald Snooks • Donald and Paul Candelaria • Doran Archuleta • Dow Chemical • Eagle Creek Ranch • Earl Romero • Ed Schmidt • Elsie and Gilbert Gomez • Ernest Montoya and Son • Estevan and Lillian Chavez • Eugene Hood • Eugene Johnson and Sons • Eunice Nunn • Farm & Ranch LP • Farmington Public Schools Youth Conservation Corps • Fish and Wildlife Service • Flying U Ranch • Forehand Ranches • Forest Service • Frank Florez • Frank Dal Molin • Frank Stewart • Fred and Deborah Beard • Fred Jacquez (Estate) • Gary and Rod Foster • Gary Lovelady • Gary Scarbrough • Gary Stallings • George Rauch • George Sandoval • Gerald Chacon • Glen and Pat Castillo • Gomez Y Gomez • Gregory and Patricia Carrasco • Gurule Land & Cattle • Hall Machine & Welding Company • Halliburton Energy Services • Hank and Holly Willemsma • Harley Ballard • Hart Greenwood, Jr. • Harvey Chatfield and Children • Hefker & Vega • Henry Terpening • Holcomb Family Ranch • Hollis and Dorothy Vaughn • Hugh Kincaid • Hurt Cattle Co. • Hyatt and Hyatt • Intrepid

Potash Company • Irvin & Richard Jacquez • Isidro Family LP • J. B. Runyan, and Wade Bennett • J.W. Jack Cain LTD Partnership • James Ogden • James • James and Michael Hirst Everage • Janice Swenson McDonald • Jason Jean Brown • Jerry Cox • Jesse and Susan Baker • Jim Hyatt • Jimmy and Richardson • Joe Chatfield • Joe David Yates • Joe • Joe Stell • John Berry • John Woodburn • Johnny Laxson • Jon Phyllis Patcheck • Jose Martinez Velasquez • Jose Ramon • Juan Cisneros • Justin Tso Yazzie • Keith Banks Smith • Kenneth, Mary and

Thank you, partners!



P. Pablo • Isaque and Saiz • J C & Francis Mills Inc • J.P. Cauhape • J.W. Woodfill • Jack Bechdol • James and Susan Wood Cliett • James Curtis Doyal • James Ray and Freddie • Jason and Shyanne Gallegos • Jay Peterson • Jerry Napi • Jerry Wheeler Jim McNutt • Jim Rogers Penny Spears • Jimmy • Joe Cox • Joe Croom Florez • Joe Kaime Trust John Randell • John Lee Chapman • Johnny L. Crockett • Jonathan • Jose Florez • Jose and Santiago Velasquez and Doyce Magby • Kee • Kelly Myers • Kenneth Patricia Huggins • Kevin &

Laurie Wilbanks • Kiehne Ranch & Cattle Co. • Kincaid Brothers • La Paloma Land & Cattle Co. • Lance Williams • Larae Sumpter • Larry and Beth Benedict • Laurie Joe Kincaid • Leo Pacheco • Leonard Rosalie and Mychal Gutierrez • Leonard Besinger, Jr. • Leonard Trujillo • Lewis Derrick, Jr. • Limestone Livestock • Lindrith Ranch • Lisa Davis • Lola J. Leer Est. • Lonnie Evans • Mack Energy • Marathon Oil • Marbob Energy • Marc McKinley • Marie Brock McCauley • Marie Haumount • Mario Ulibarri • Mark Lepich • Mark McCloy • Marlin Virden • Martha Skeen • Mary Beth Truby • Mary Gallegos • Mary Lou Beaty • Mary Nobles • Mary Weathers • Matt and Jodie Chism • Max and Angie Tachias • Merit Energy Company • MGW Cattle Company • Montoya Sheep and Cattle Co. • Monty Beckham • Ms. Lydia Valdez • Mule Deer Foundation • Nadel and Gussman • National Fish and Wildlife Foundation • National Wild Turkey Federation • National Wildlife Federation • Natural Resources Conservation Service • Navajo Lake State Park • Navajo Nation, The Navajo Land Department • New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts • New Mexico Cattle Growers Association • New Mexico Department of Game and Fish • New Mexico Department of Transportation • New Mexico Oil and Gas Association • New Mexico Quail, Inc. • New Mexico State Land Office • NM Hay and Livestock Co. • NMSU College of Agriculture, Department of Entomology and Weed Science • NMSU Cooperative Extension • NMSU Range Improvement Task Force • Nolberto Hernandez • Norma Stringer • Ogden Farms and Cattle Company • Orlando Lucero • Oxy USA • Pacheco Ranches • Pat Vigil Estate • Patrick, Pat, and Jerry Montoya • Paul and Yvonne Mott • Paul Bandy • Paul Velasquez • Pearce Trust • Pete and Lauren Peterson • Phil and Judy Wallin • Philip & Kendra Stell • Phillip Holcomb • Pioneer Pipeline Company • Playa Lakes Joint Venture • PWB • Quail Unlimited • Ralph Wilson • Rancho Largo • Randy Barker • Ray and April Romero • Ray Westall • Red Mountain Ranch • Richardson Cattle Co. • Ridley Gardner • Rilla King • Rio Hondo Land & Cattle Co. • Robert and Marcia Jolley • Robert Brown • Robert Costello • Robert Hooten • Robert Jolly • Robert Ortega • Robert Seeley • Robert Taylor • Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation • Rod Hille • Ronald Woolf • Roosevelt Electric Cooperative • Ross Ligon • Roy & Roy Jr. Peace Trust • Roy Creamer • Roy Williams Estate • Rubert Madera • Rudy W. Tenorio & Sons • Ryan Fancher • Safari Club International • Sam and Barbara Jean Elkins Trust • Sam Gutierrez • San Juan Cooperative Weed Management Working Group • San Juan County • San Juan County Farm and Ranch Improvement Board • San Juan Soil and Water Conservation District • Sandia National Laboratories • Santiago Velasquez • Scotty Cox • Sean and Dawnette Washburn • Sid Savage • Sikes Act Habitat Stamp Program • Six Shooter Ranch • Smyer Family Corporation • Snyder Ranches • Southern Ute Tribe • Southwest Conservation Corps / Veterans Green Corps • Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife • Stacy Mills • Stephen and Patricia Janos Revocable Trust • Stephenson Ranch, Inc. • Steve and Blaine Haines • Steve Chavez • T. A. Mayes • The Nature Conservancy • The Peregrine Fund • Thelma Nickles • Thomas Cooper • Thomas L. and Thomas B. Herrera • Tom McCauley & Sons, Inc. • Trent and Shelly Nielson • Truby Family • Twin Peaks Ranch Partnership • Ubaldo Maestas • Upper XT Ranch • Vernon Crockett • Vicente and Kelli Rodarte • W.G. Kennedy • W.L. Stevenson • Wally Ferguson • Wayland Perry • Wayne Boles • Wesley Able • Wilderness Alliance • William Darnell • William Colwell • William Doepp Crockett Rev. Trust • William Maestas • Williams Company • Williams Family Ranches • Winston Ballard • XTO Energy • Yates Drilling Company • Yates Petroleum Corporation • Zay and Nancy Clopton

Partners Help Restore West Potrillos

On the barren foothills of the West Potrillo Mountains southwest of Las Cruces, New Mexico, a group that included sportsmen, ranchers, biologists and conservationists looked out over the landscape as a crop duster appeared in the distant sky. Ray Lister with the BLM's Las Cruces District Office convened the group to witness the early stages of an effort to restore a vast swath of Chihuahuan Desert.

Motivated by a shared concern for the health of the West Potrillos, this diverse group of individuals came together to form a unique partnership to restore an area they all value.

"When you're out here, there's nothing but creosote as far as the eye can see," Lister said. "A couple years from now, this will be a grassland again, restored to a healthy ecological state."

Early settlers wrote of the flowing grasslands across New Mexico. However, years of overgrazing in the late 1800s put a tremendous strain on the lands, causing significant vegetation changes as brush species like creosote and mesquite came to dominate the landscape over time, consuming precious resources and out-competing native grasses. What was once a healthy grassland has now become a degraded creosote-infested monoculture. With very little grass left, the habitat cannot support the abundant and diverse wildlife it once could.

On this particular 26,000-acre project, planes applied an herbicide to significantly reduce the creosote and allow for native grasses to return. This, in turn, will reduce harmful run-off and erosion, and significantly improve habitat conditions for wildlife.

These rich but fragile lands, a volcanic area with historic lava flows, have long been valued for their scenic, recreational, and wilderness qualities. Recreation opportunities include hiking, bird watching, photography, and hunting.

"This area is a very special place to a lot of different people," Lister explained. "Ranchers, sportsmen, and wilderness advocates all care deeply about the West Potrillos. This is a unique restoration project because it occurs within a wilderness study area. And even though everyone's approaching this effort with their own perspective, we've been able to come together and find a lot of common ground to develop a strategy to improve the health of the watershed and return the vegetative community to its natural potential."

"This partnership effort goes far beyond traditional partnerships. This project out here in the West Potrillos is about folks on the ground figuring out how to work together and then actually doing it to benefit the land."
- Ken Leiting, New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts

Ken Leiting from the New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts has been involved in the funding of the project, working as an intermediary between the BLM and the local conservation districts.

He sees this partnership as a unique collaborative effort between federal, state, and local agencies, as well as a wide variety of conservation and sportsmen groups.

"This partnership effort goes far beyond traditional partnerships," Leiting said. "This project out here in the West Potrillos is about folks on the ground figuring out how to work together



Front row from left to right: Ken Leiting, New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts; Mark Spiess, New Mexico Quail, Inc.; Bob Tafanelli, Mesilla Valley Audubon Society; Dara Parker, Senator Bingaman's Las Cruces office; Jim McCormick, BLM Las Cruces District Office; John Elwell, Williams Family Ranch. Back row: Pat Mathis, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish; Ray Lister, BLM Las Cruces District Office; Bud Starnes, New Mexico Department of Agriculture; Nathan Small, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance; Dudley Williams, Williams Family Ranch; Eric Ernst, BLM Las Cruces District Office.

and then actually doing it to benefit the land.”

For Nathan Small with the New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, this partnership has a long history, going back years to improve access. When he first heard about the potential treatment, he had a concern over the use of herbicides. Lister organized a field trip to the West Potrillos and a previously-treated site for members of the Wilderness Alliance to see for themselves the benefits of these restoration treatments.

“Because the project involves chemicals, this isn’t an issue to be taken lightly,” Small said. “But once we got out and saw the successes and potential of what was happening on the ground with these types of treatments, we got on board to support the effort. There are many diverse stakeholders involved, and we’ve got the opportunity to restore native grasslands and help get the land back to a healthy state. It’s a very positive situation.”

The BLM regularly consults with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to identify priority areas for habitat restoration and participate in project design to ensure wildlife habitat objectives are addressed.

Pat Mathis, a wildlife biologist with New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, was an early supporter of the project. “Without any intervention, this place would not get better on its own,” Mathis said. “We’re enthusiastic about this project and think it will be great for wildlife.”

Rancher Dudley Williams, the permittee on this particular site, spoke highly of the many partners coming together to accomplish this project.

“I’ve always been an advocate of restoration because the BLM and I can work together to find

an option that works for all of us,” Williams said. “We all see the need to maintain healthy grasses, and not just for the ranching community, but for the health of the land and wildlife as well.”

New Mexico Quail, Inc. and its predecessor Quail Unlimited have worked with the BLM in the past to improve quail habitat in southern New Mexico.

“The sportsmen in our organization are excited to be part of such a worthwhile project,” said John Moen, president of New Mexico Quail, Inc. “The habitat values in the West Potrillos will be increased a hundredfold. We have been waiting years for a project like this in Doña Ana County.

Bob Tafanelli, representing the Mesilla Valley Audubon Society and New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, was approached by Lister for input from the wilderness community. Tafanelli had some initial concerns over the use of herbicides, monitoring and grazing. After visiting other treatment sites and seeing the potential benefits of using herbicides to restore

degraded landscapes, and being assured that scientific monitoring would be conducted and that no additional cattle will be grazed on the treatment sites, he endorsed the project.

“Grassland bird species have been in decline for the past fifty years,” Tafanelli said. “With this project we have the opportunity to restore crucial habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife.”

With the treatment begun in December 2010, the partners are confident this project will restore the West Potrillos to a healthy ecological condition, benefitting the land, wildlife, and many stakeholders who value this special place.

“This project is a win-win for everyone involved,” Small said.

The New Mexico Chapter of the Society for Range Management awarded the West Potrillos Grassland Restoration Project Team with its 2011 “Excellence in Range Management” Award.

This project would not have been successful without the support of these organizations and agencies:

Williams Family Ranches, LLC
Doña Ana Soil and Water Conservation District
New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
USDA ARS, Jornada Experimental Range
New Mexico Wilderness Alliance
New Mexico State Land Office
New Mexico Quail, Inc.

A New Cooperative Conservation Model

By Doug Burger, BLM Pecos District Manager

Over the past few years, two unique species in southeastern New Mexico, the dunes sagebrush lizard and the lesser prairie chicken, have been the subject of much debate as concern grows about the health of their habitat and their potential listing on the Endangered Species List.

The prairie chicken's habitat covers portions of Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Habitat for the sand dune lizard is found only in southeastern New Mexico and a small portion of west Texas.



While BLM is required by federal law to allow multiple-use activities on public lands, including oil and gas development, grazing, and recreation, such activities can sometimes impact wildlife habitat. Thus, one of the BLM's primary goals is to find a healthy balance between responsible and sustainable development on public lands and the protection of wildlife habitat. These are not mutually exclusive.

Faced with the potential listing of the dunes sagebrush lizard and lesser prairie chicken on the Endangered Species List, a decision no one

in southeastern New Mexico desires, a proactive and innovative coalition of partners – made up of oil and gas industry, ranchers, conservation groups and government agencies – has emerged with a new cooperative conservation model that is seeing great success in protecting these species by conserving their habitat and mitigating disruptive impacts.

Typically, the traditional process of listing a species as endangered pits industry groups against environmentalists, resulting in combative and litigious battles that far too

often do little to actually benefit the species.



There's a better way. The cooperative conservation model being used today in southeastern New Mexico is proving that

government agencies, industry groups, and ranchers can work together to find pragmatic and beneficial solutions to protect sensitive species without dire consequences to economic development or wildlife habitat.

About four years ago, BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the Center for Excellence for

Caliche Road Removal



Oil field sites containing compacted caliche are often void of vegetation years after abandonment. Removing caliche benefits wildlife by defragmenting disturbed habitat and allowing the revegetation of native species.

Restore New Mexico Award Winners

The Candidate Conservation Agreements have brought many different agencies, local governments, conservation interests, ranchers and energy companies together to collaborate on proactive measures to protect and enhance the habitat of the dunes sagebrush lizard and lesser prairie chicken.

In October 2011, the BLM recognized six energy companies for their leadership and proactive efforts to support this effort. As a result of this collaboration, all the parties have produced a better habitat conservation process for both the sand dune lizard and the lesser prairie chicken.



2011 Restore New Mexico Award Winners (from left to right): John Smitherman, BOPCO, LP; Eileen Dey, Conoco Phillips; Jerry Fanning, Yates Petroleum Corporation; Vickie Sanchez, Devon Energy Corporation; Matt Hyde, Concho Resources, Inc.; Tom Janiszewski, OXY USA, Ltd.

Hazardous Materials began developing a tool called the Candidate Conservation Agreement, or CCA. The focus of this voluntary agreement is to work with others who use the landscape - like ranchers and oil and gas companies - to form proactive partnerships to improve and protect the habitat of the dunes sagebrush lizard and the lesser prairie chicken.

In this agreement, participants agree to follow a list of conservation practices that reduce or eliminate impacts to the habitat of both species. In addition, oil and gas companies agree to fund projects that restore or reclaim habitat that has been previously impacted or is threatened by invasive brush.

In return for these conservation commitments, participants receive a high degree of certainty that if a species becomes listed as threatened or endangered, despite their efforts, they will not be required to make significant additional changes in their activities. If these species are listed, volunteers in the program will be able to continue their activities because they've already put strict

and beneficial actions in place, while companies and landowners who have not signed up will have to do go through a lengthy consultation process with the agencies.

Candidate Conservation Agreements apply to activities on federal land. A similar program exists for activities on state and private lands, the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA). One significant

accomplishment of the CCAA is the protection achieved for the dunes sagebrush lizard and lesser prairie chicken on state and private lands. Currently, state and private oil and gas leases rarely contain protections for these species. When

companies sign up under a CCAA, they commit to the same habitat protections on state and private land as required on federal lands.

Working together under this agreement, partners are *voluntarily* making considerable progress in protecting the species. Some of the conservation measures being taken to protect and enhance habitat include:

- The BLM has closed over 370,000 acres to future

"The cooperative conservation model being used today in southeastern New Mexico is proving that government agencies, industry groups, and ranchers can work together to find pragmatic and beneficial solutions to protect sensitive species without dire consequences to economic development or wildlife habitat."
- Doug Burger, BLM Pecos District Manager

Structure Removal



Aerial power lines, poles, and other tall structures pose serious flight barriers and hazards to lesser prairie chickens. These structures create areas wildlife tend to avoid and provide perches and nesting habitat for birds that prey upon lesser prairie chickens. BLM and partners are working to remove old and unnecessary structures.

oil and gas leasing. Much of this area includes significant habitat for the dunes sagebrush lizard and lesser prairie chicken.

- Working with the state and private landowners to acquire and preserve important habitat for the species.
- Conducting herbicide treatments on invasive mesquite to improve and restore healthy habitat

conditions.

- Working with industry to implement drilling measures that do not impact habitat areas.
- Reclaiming historic and unused oil and gas sites to reduce habitat fragmentation.

The traditional argument has been that once a species is listed as endangered, necessary protections will then be put in place to protect the species. However, with this cooperative conservation model, what we're doing right now is enacting these same restrictions, only in advance. The benefits an endangered species listing may provide in the future are already being gained, only sooner and possibly without the listing. And we're creating more goodwill, the importance of which cannot be overstated given the contentious debates too often surrounding past and current efforts to protect sensitive species.

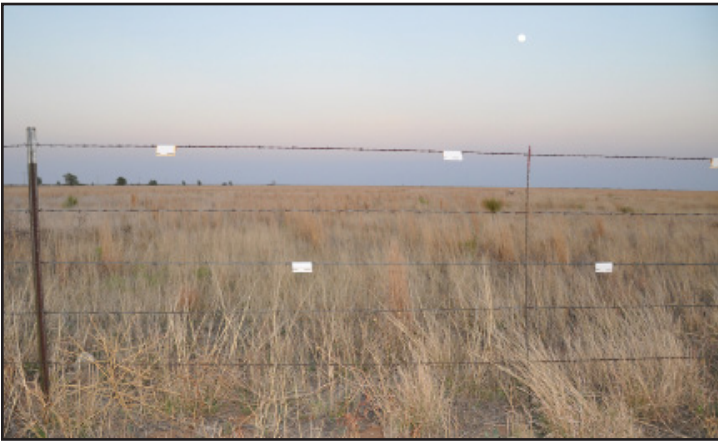
With the conservation and mitigation measures being embraced, we're seeing positive and encouraging progress on the ground that's already having great success in protecting the species. These efforts are not cheap or easy, but the accomplishments being achieved, not to mention the investment and support among industry groups, only highlight the optimism we all share that this new model offers a better way for protecting wildlife.

What this cooperative conservation model shows is that the challenges we face do not require "all or nothing" solutions. Ranching and energy

Oil Pad Well Marker Removal



Dry hole well markers provide perches for raptors. Removal of these markers helps reduce predation on lesser prairie chickens. Old markers are being replaced with small plates (right).



Installation of simple and inexpensive white plastic fence markers has significantly reduced mortality rates from lesser prairie chickens colliding into fences in the pre-dawn flight hours when they are gliding into mating areas.

development play critical roles in the economic and social fabric of southeast New Mexico and the nation. They're not going away anytime soon, even if these species are listed as endangered. But that doesn't mean that we must choose between protecting wildlife or economic development and jobs. Balancing responsible economic development and habitat protection is not just a possibility – it's a reality.

The dunes sagebrush lizard and lesser prairie chicken have more going for them than any other species on the candidate list because of all the partners and stakeholders championing habitat protection and mitigation measures through these cooperative conservation efforts.

What's at stake in this effort is not just the future health of one or two species, but the success of cooperative conservation efforts altogether. Hanging in the balance here is the critical question of whether different groups of people can find common ground and work together to solve a problem with practical solutions.

This cooperative conservation effort is succeeding at protecting the dunes sagebrush lizard and lesser prairie chicken and proving that better options exist for protecting threatened species. We hope it's given time to continue working.

For more information about the CCA / CCAA program or to sign up, visit www.fws.gov/southwest/es/NewMexico.

Success by the Numbers

816,000

mineral acres enrolled

29

oil and gas companies enrolled

1.5 million

ranching acres enrolled

39

ranchers enrolled

\$3 million

dollar amount contributed by oil and gas companies to fund habitat improvement projects

1,400

acres of historic or abandoned oil and gas activity reclaimed

370,000

acres closed to future mineral leasing

847,000

acres withdrawn in dunes sagebrush lizard and lesser prairie chicken habitat from future wind or solar projects to protect this habitat

310,000

acres of vegetation treatments benefitting dunes sagebrush lizard and lesser prairie chicken habitat

Partnering with the Ranching Community

Since Restore New Mexico began in 2005, the partnership between the BLM and the ranching community has been critical to the success of the program.

Because of the “checkerboard” pattern of much of New Mexico’s landscape - a mix of private, state, and federal land - our partners realized early on that restoring the health of the land on a broad, landscape scale would be impossible if we were only treating piecemeal areas. Instead, we adopted a “color blind” strategy to treat the land, meaning we would look at the land not in terms of fences and boundaries but with a wide, landscape-scale approach, regardless of ownership.

This broad approach has allowed us to treat much larger tracts of land, which has a much greater impact on rangeland health, wildlife, and the watershed, but it’s not something any one group can do alone. It requires the cooperation of many different individuals and groups, ranchers in particular.

Ranchers play a key role in managing the health of the land and restoring impaired areas back to

healthy conditions.

“Ranchers want healthy lands, just as much as we do,” said Roger Cumpian, BLM-New Mexico Rangeland Management Specialist. “The BLM is a federal agency charged with managing the land, but ranchers are also very concerned about the health of the land, so there are a lot of common concerns and objectives here. It’s a great opportunity to work together.”

“Restore New Mexico is a model that we wish other agencies would take and follow. It demonstrates that there can be cooperation for the good of the land and wildlife.” - Caren Cowan, Executive Director, New Mexico Cattle Growers’ Association

Early on in the Restore program, BLM and ranchers began working together more closely because of the availability of funds to conduct restoration projects on federal lands if the treatments benefitted private property. These funds –

through the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – presented an ideal opportunity for the BLM and private ranchers to partner to improve and maintain the health of the natural resources, especially since so much BLM public land and private land are intermingled.

One of BLM’s multiple-use missions is to allow livestock grazing on federal lands. BLM-New Mexico administers permits held by ranchers who

Restore/EQIP Allotment Brush Control



Restore New Mexico partners treated the Henery Tank Allotment north of Roswell using available NRCS/EQIP funds. The photos above show conditions before treatment began (July 2007) and after treatment (August 2009).

Farmington Rancher Receives 2011 Restore New Mexico Award

Farmington area rancher Pat Montoya was presented with a 2011 Restore New Mexico Award in December at the New Mexico Joint Stockman's Convention in Albuquerque for his work to improve range conditions on his ranch and BLM public land allotments.

Montoya has been an active rancher for almost 60 years. He has also been a partner in the Restore New Mexico initiative since its origins in 2005, investing time, money and his own equipment in a variety of efforts to improve the land he grazes.

To date, Pat has completed about 3,800 acres of sagebrush treatments and over 800 acres of greasewood removal on the Jaramillo Canyon and Muñoz grazing allotments. He has also aggressively worked to combat noxious weeds and other invasive species on his ranch and public land allotments. The treated pastures have responded so well that they have become examples for rangeland health in the Farmington area.



Pat Montoya, recipient of a 2011 Restore New Mexico Award, on one of his restored allotments.

Pat's livestock management techniques have complimented the vegetative treatments he's conducted. He routinely rotates and rests his pastures and has developed new water catchment ponds that reduce sediment loads into the San Juan River and provide a vital resource for his livestock and area wildlife.

graze their livestock, mostly cattle, on allotments under BLM management.

In managing livestock grazing on public rangelands, the BLM's overall objective is to ensure the long-term health and productivity of these lands. Ranchers share this same objective, so the opportunity to work together to accomplish common goals and improve the health of the land under the Restore New Mexico program made sense.

Initially, there was a fair amount of skepticism among ranchers to partnering with the federal government to treat their lands, especially since ranchers are expected to put up some of their own money for treatments, rest their livestock from treated areas for two years to allow the land to recover, and are not allowed to graze additional livestock on treated areas. But once a few ranchers stepped up and joined the Restore initiative, and after others saw firsthand the benefits of grassland restoration treatments, namely more grasses for their livestock,

skepticism began shifting towards cooperation.

"Ranchers are always looking for what's best for the land, because if things aren't good, you're not going to make a living," said Caren Cowan, Executive Director of New Mexico Cattle Growers' Association. "Restore New Mexico is a model that we wish other agencies would take and follow. It demonstrates there can be cooperation for the good of the land and wildlife."

This increasingly successful and cooperative partnership between BLM and ranchers is resulting in healthier rangeland and watershed conditions that benefit both wildlife and the ranching community, results that would have been difficult to achieve without partnering.

"BLM has been working with ranchers and working for the good of the land, which shows that we can do both," Cowan said. "It's not one or the other."

Partnership Behind Bighorn Sheep Delisting

Last November, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish announced the removal of desert bighorn sheep from the New Mexico list of threatened and endangered species. The species, once on the brink of extinction in New Mexico and listed on the state's list of threatened species since 1972, had made a remarkable recovery.

It's not often that species come off the endangered species list. Usually, once an animal is listed, it's very difficult to make the changes necessary for its recovery. The delisting of the desert bighorn was possible because of the strong partnerships between state and federal agencies, as well as the critical contributions of wildlife and conservation groups.

The strong partnership between BLM and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to restore bighorn sheep to a healthy, sustainable number has been critical to the species' recovery.

Historically, bighorn sheep numbered in the thousands across southern and central New Mexico's mountain ranges. However, the sheep's population began to decrease from overhunting and diseases from domestic sheep brought in by European settlers beginning in the late 1800s.

By the 1970s, desert bighorn numbers had fallen dangerously low. The species was listed on the New Mexico endangered species list in 1980.



Volunteers help install a water catchment for desert bighorn sheep and other wildlife within the Ladrone Mountain-Devils Backbone ACEC. From left to right: John Sherman (BLM), Denny Apachito (BLM), Traci Tadano (BLM), Dave Heft (US Forest Service), Bob Nordstrum (Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation), and Dale Hall (Game and Fish Habitat Stamp Coordinator).



The graph above shows the population increase for desert bighorn sheep in New Mexico from 1980 to 2010.

BLM's Las Cruces District Office and Socorro Field Office have worked for years with Game and Fish to improve conditions for bighorn sheep and reintroduce sheep to their historic mountain ranges. A number of significant projects have taken place, including vegetative treatments, watershed restoration, closure of unused and unnecessary roads, fence improvements, and installations of water catchments. All of these projects have helped to enhance and restore habitat conditions across the landscape.

Many sheep habitat areas have become overly dense with vegetation, piñon-juniper especially, which provides cover for mountain lion predators and uses up water resources at an unnaturally high rate. Prescribed fires, as well as mechanical thinnings, have been conducted to reduce this density and provide more water for the grasses and forbs bighorns eat.

BLM, Game and Fish, and volunteers have installed or repaired numerous water catchments, which collect rainwater and provide a more regular water source for bighorn sheep and other area wildlife.

Miles of old and unnecessary fencing have been removed or repaired. Older fencing often inhibits a sheep herd's movement, restricting available forage and genetic diversity from breeding with other herds. Newer fencing with a smoother bottom higher off the ground has been installed to allow sheep to move under it more easily.

Since 1979, Game and Fish has conducted 34 desert bighorn sheep releases, many of which have taken place on public land managed by the BLM. Game and Fish raises desert bighorn sheep at its Red Rock facility in southern New Mexico and also acquires sheep from private ranches.

One challenge of transplanting bighorn sheep has been mountain lion predation on released sheep herds before their numbers are sustainable. Ongoing efforts have been made to keep mountain lion populations in check in areas bighorn sheep are released to allow the transplanted populations a better chance of survival.

Restore New Mexico's efforts to reduce creosote in lower elevations and return creosote-infested areas to healthy grasslands will help sheep populations move back and forth between mountain ranges. Currently, sheep avoid shrub areas covered in creosote, which limits their movement. As treated areas begin to return to healthy grasslands, these restoration projects can help improve genetic diversity between mountain populations by allowing greater mobility between sheep herds.

The efforts to recover desert bighorn sheep have been funded almost entirely with sportsmen dollars. The Habitat Stamp program and the auctioning of game commission bighorn sheep hunting tags have funded much of these critically important habitat restoration projects, which total



Desert bighorn sheep released in November 2011 in the Peloncillo Mountains.

Photo by Ciara Cusack

about a half million dollars a year.

Looking ahead, wildlife biologists with Game and Fish and the BLM are eager to continue working together to improve desert bighorn habitat, especially since there are many historic sheep habitat areas currently unoccupied. The ultimate goal is not simply the delisting of bighorn sheep; that's just a step along the way. Rather, Game and Fish and BLM are committed to increasing numbers and distribution of bighorn sheep across New Mexico to a sustainable level more in line with historic populations.

With the continued success of the partnership between BLM and Game and Fish, the health and numbers of desert bighorn sheep should continue to improve.

Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep

While not as threatened as the desert bighorn sheep in southern New Mexico, the Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, a different subspecies, has still received significant attention from Game and Fish and BLM. These two agencies have cooperated together on Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep releases in northern New Mexico, with recent releases occurring at the Taos Pueblo and on BLM-managed public land near the Taos Junction Bridge. Recent surveys have shown the herds to be healthy and growing, and even spreading farther north to healthy habitat.



Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep released near the Taos Junction Bridge in northern New Mexico.

Photo courtesy of Dan Williams, NMDGF

Youth Help Restore New Mexico

Over the past few years, BLM-New Mexico has had the great opportunity to combine two of our top priorities – helping improve the health of the land and providing positive work and educational experience for youth.

With a variety of cooperative agreements in place, BLM and our partners have helped to fund, employ, and assist a number of youth programs, which not only provide valuable work experience, helping instill in young people the importance and virtues of land stewardship, but also complete beneficial land restoration and habitat improvement projects. Below are just a few of the positive programs in place.

Navajo Youth Watershed Restoration

For the past few years, BLM has partnered with the Rio Puerco Alliance to fund Navajo youth projects involving watershed restoration of the Rio Puerco. Navajo youth crews - ranging in age from 14 to early 20s - work from six to ten weeks every summer on projects, usually involving erosion control at the Ojo Encino and Torreon Chapters. About 12 youth participate each year.

BLM has helped fund this project for the past three years, recently through the Restore New Mexico program.

Navajo youth work on a variety of projects, including road work, riparian restoration, planting cottonwoods and willows. The work is labor intensive but extremely effective at reducing



At the Asombro Institute's Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park, students participate in hands-on studies to learn about desert ecosystems and the process of science. In this long-term experiment, students examine the effects of reduced precipitation on soil moisture and plant growth. This study is modeled after an experiment at the USDA-ARS Jornada Experimental Range, just north of the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park.

erosion and sediment loads.

"It's hard work but absolutely meaningful for the kids," said Barbara Johnson, Executive Director of the Rio Puerco Alliance. "Many of them come back every year, and the experience has even inspired some to continue their education in the natural resources and environmental fields."

The Asombro Institute for Science Education

The mission of the Asombro Institute is to increase science literacy among students in southern New Mexico. With a 935-acre Chihuahuan Desert Nature Park outside of Las Cruces, Asombro hosts field trips for local school groups, as well as hands-on programs at schools, which involve



Navajo youth summer crews complete a variety of important restoration projects, including erosion control structures along the Rio Puerco.

indoor and outdoor lesson plans focused on local ecology.

Instead of relying on textbooks, the Asombro Institute provides a hands-on learning experience based on local and current scientific issues.

Asombro receives funding from BLM's Restore New Mexico program and uses current research being conducted from Restore's land restoration projects as a tool to help middle and high school students better understand the biodiversity and health of the Chihuahuan Desert.

"Our programs help students to understand that science is an ongoing process, and people are still learning about the ecosystems around their homes," said Stephanie Bestelmeyer, Asombro Institute Executive Director. "Students learn that science isn't something that was done a long time ago by men in white lab coats, but that it's something dynamic and always changing and all around us."

The Asombro Institute has also developed scientific kits it provides to teachers and hosts free workshops to train local teachers to incorporate the lessons into their curriculum. All of Asombro's lesson plans and science kits are tied to the State of New Mexico's education standards.

Student Conservation Corps

The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is a national organization dedicated to protecting and restoring natural resources across the country by engaging young people in hands-on service activities to benefit the land.

BLM-New Mexico has been working with the Student Conservation Corps (SCC), a sub-group of SCA, for years, providing college-age youth with meaningful natural resource work experience. The work is often dirty and strenuous but beneficial to public lands.

Last year's SCC group worked with many of our field offices across New Mexico helping with much-needed restoration work, primarily trail restoration and erosion control projects.



Photo by Jaclyn Waggoner



The 2011 BLM-New Mexico Student Conservation Corps completed many beneficial restoration projects across New Mexico, including this restoration of off-highway vehicle impacts in the Rio Chama Wilderness Study Area.

"For the young people I have supervised," said Peter Gernsheimer, project leader for the SCC's 2011 New Mexico Restoration Corps, "the SCC/BLM programs have given them a better understanding of America's land while engaging them in service projects that give them the feeling that they're improving the state of the environment for themselves and for the future."

RESTORE NEW MEXICO

BLM New Mexico State Office
301 Dinosaur Trail
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87508
(505) 954-2000



Restore New Mexico Contacts:
Don Ellsworth (505) 761-8900
Lu Burger (575) 627-0248
Bill Merhege (505) 954-2168



www.blm.gov/nm/restore
www.facebook.com/blmnewmexico

